

Rainforest Action Network Green Campaign

A Senior Project

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Bachelor of Fine Arts

by

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Abstract

This is a paper documenting the research and process of creating a sustainable campaign for the non-profit Rainforest Action Network.

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Chapter I – Introduction

Considering how pertinent green design is now and will be into the future, I decided to research and implement a green campaign of my own. We are coming into a period in graphic design when being green is not just a trend anymore, and those who do not keep up with it will be left behind. We, as designers, need to re-think the whole design process, keeping the last stage of design (printing and distribution) at the forefront of our thoughts throughout the whole process. Being green is not accomplished in one step; it must be implemented every step of the way, from the use of paper and ink to how the product is assembled and printed.

Statement of the Problem

To apply what I have learned through researching such books as *Green Graphic Design*, *SustianAble*, and *Cradle to Cradle*, I am creating a mock campaign for the non-profit Rainforest Action Network (RAN) that works to improve upon many issues that negatively affect people and the environment. These issues include de-forestation, global warming, human rights, energy, and sustainable economies. RAN has successfully changed some companies' business practices to be more eco-friendly and has raised much public awareness, but they are the first to admit that it is going to take a great deal of progress in order to create a sustainable world in our lifetime.

Purpose/Objective of the Study

The objective of my project was to make an assertive and dynamic campaign for RAN consisting of a new logo, posters, brochure, and mailer which targets consumers and persuades them to be more informed and donate money or services to RAN. Apart from the goal of creating a successful campaign for RAN, there was also the challenge of creating a campaign that was sustainable in itself. The campaign was designed to have a minimal effect on the environment—attained primarily through paper and ink choices, along with the design for production (the size of the pieces, shapes, and how they were assembled).

Limitations of the Study

Although green design can be limited through cost, materials, and location (it is typically more expensive because of the materials used and it is a lot harder to find printers that utilize green practices), this particular project was much cheaper and easier to print than I anticipated. I ordered my paper from Neenah Papers, and only had to pay shipping because they were sample sheets. Therefore, printing was much cheaper than usual because I provided the paper rather than the printers. Since I was only printing a small quantity, I used laser printing, whereas, if the run were larger, a more sustainable printing method would have been used for that quantity (I will explain more on printing in the research section). In terms of time, the project had to be completed in approximately two months.

Glossary of Terms

Downcycled– involves processing used materials into new products, or the re-use of a product with crippled functionality for alternative purposes. **Hybrid products**– products that are made from mixed materials making them hard if not impossible to recycle. **Sustainable**– the ability to avoid the long-term depletion of natural resources. **Local vendors**– vendors that are nearby so as to not have to ship products long distances. **Longevity**– the long duration of life. **Neenah Papers**– A paper company who is one of the leaders in the industry who uses recycled fibers and FSC certified papers. **Bleed**– term that refers to printing that goes beyond the edge of the sheet after trimming. **Cyclical design**– to design in a manner to re-use and not come to an end state (as opposed to linear design). **Linear Design**–to design in a manner that has an end to the lifecycle of a product. **Informed purchasing**– to be able to make an educated decision about what one is buying and the company they are buying from. **Recycled paper**– paper coming from either post or pre-consumer waste. **Virgin Fiber**– paper that is derived directly from its organic source

Waterless printing– a method of offset printing which is less environmentally damaging than conventional lithographic printing. **Digital printing**– the reproduction of digital images on a physical surface. It is generally used for short print runs, and for the customization of print media. **Lithography**– a method for printing using a stone (Lithographic Limestone) or a metal plate with a completely smooth surface. Lithography works because of the mutual repulsion of oil and water. The image is drawn on the surface of the print plate with a fat or oil-based medium (hydrophobic),

which may be pigmented to make the drawing visible. **FSC certified**– an independent third party certifier of sustainably harvested virgin fiber and mixed used recycle content for paper. **Synthetic Paper**– paper made from plastics. **Ink coverage**– the amount of ink that covers an area of the paper. **Hemp paper**– paper made from hemp can take more fertilizer and pesticides to produce the same amount of fiber as trees. **Bamboo fiber**– An alternative to traditional tree fiber used for paper. **Agriculture residue**–uses leftover waste from such things as sugar cane, wheat straw, banana fiber, and rice straw to make paper fiber (one of the best options for the future of paper). **Closed-loop pulp**– a process in paper making that continuously re-uses water. **Biopolymer paper**– a range of materials made from natural resources that have physical characteristics similar to petroleum-based plastics. **Green Branding**– a form of design activism; projecting values through visual communication for environmental conservation and sustainable business practices.

Chapter II – Review of Research

Before even starting to think about concepts for RAN’s campaign, I had to do considerable research to further grasp the concept of green design and how I was going to integrate it into my project. In doing this, I read the books *Cradle to Cradle*, *SustainAble*, and *Green Graphic Design*. I also read a few articles, particularly one in the October 2009 issue of Print Magazine titled, “Is Going Green as Hard as It seems?”. Although these materials have a lot of common information, they all provided valuable, different ideas.

In reading the article, I found it refreshing to read a more personal sense of what being green means to current designers, in comparison to the more technological information I had been reading from the books. One designer, Tina Chang, mentions the issue with the buzz surrounding the word “green” and how we need not allow ourselves simply to put a label on things, but really push the effort to be green to the limit and not be satisfied with the minimum. Another designer in this article, Anke Stohlmann, rephrases what the speaker Naomi Pearson had to say about green not being accomplished in one step, but becoming a way of life and getting there gradually. Overall, the designers in the article all acknowledged that becoming green is not the cheapest or easiest way to design. While some designers seemed to have more of the mentality that it is expected of us (as designers) to be green, others seemed to look beyond that and truly want to make the change because it is the right thing to do.

Aside from the article, the books offered more concrete ways to go about not only producing green design, but also thinking in new ways throughout the design process. Particularly in *Cradle to Cradle*, the idea is raised repeatedly that we must re-think how we make things. Recycling is not the answer, in fact, in some cases, recycling certain products creates more toxins in making it re-usable again. Designers must think about the longevity of the product and the materials used to create it, such as, do not use a highly durable material for a short-lived product. But more than anything, the designer’s ultimate goal is to make products that are not eventually thrown away, but rather to make something new at the end of its life. This was a great

book to broaden my thinking and make me focus on parts of the design process I do not usually consider.

When reading *SustainAble* and *Green Graphic Design*, the more specific ideas of how to make the campaign actually green came into play. Using local vendors, minimizing ink coverage, and using recycled FSC certified paper are just some suggestions the books offer. In *SustainAble*, useful information also emerges when taking different situations into account. For instance, jobs under 2,000 copies would be most environmentally friendly using digital printing, whereas larger quantities would be preferably printed using offset printing. Also, there is a lot that goes into the consideration of which kind of paper to use. There are advantages and disadvantages to everything; for instance, although the option to use tree-free paper may seem favorable, when taking into account the lifecycle of the individual product and the chemicals needed for manufacturing, this option may not actually be sustainable. One of the best options for paper, which will hopefully become more available in the future, is that which is made from agricultural waste, which would have otherwise been burned or thrown away. When considering paper options, there is an array of concerns, from the cost to manufacture, to the pesticides and fertilizers used to grow and to the habitats that are provided or destroyed. There is not one clear answer as to which is the best, for everything has its faults—it is finding the best option for the individual project.

Aside from paper, the two books also touch on the topics of inks, plastics, sizing and proportions (how to best utilize the space available). All of these and more

can come into play when making a green design, thinking more cyclically than linearly. As a result of practicing green design, companies can actually increase their profitability, while at the same time creating a stronger trust and relationship with its costumers. But, aside from company practices, *Green Graphic Design* also talks of the real impact designers can have—the ability to communicate, persuade and change how audiences react.

The research process was two-fold, first focusing on what it means to be green, and then researching the Non-Profit, RAN. RAN is a non-profit that really makes things happen, and they are not always nice about it. Known as “some of the most savvy environmental agitators in the business”, RAN has hard-hitting campaigns that push companies to balance profits with principles (to do well by doing good) as well as influencing public opinion and creating consumer pressure. Their issues include: De-Forestation, Global Warming, Human Rights, Energy, and Sustainable Economies with campaigns ranging from “Freedom From Oil” to “Rainforest Agribusiness.”

Chapter III – Procedures and Results

Beginning with the re-design of the logo for RAN, I explored multiple directions, some with images, and others solely typographic. Initially, I explored the idea that RAN has “environmentalism with teeth” and was either going to re-design the cat they have in their current logo, or go with a sharp, angular typeface insinuating teeth. After some consideration, the broad range in RAN’s issues made it

difficult to illustrate all of them together, encompassed in one logo, while choosing just one issue was problematic as well because of the limitations it implied for the company. The cat logo was also limiting in its specific iconography. Ultimately, this is why I choose to do a typographic logo. When thinking about RAN and what they do, I chose two words that I think really convey the Non-Profit—action and protection. To implement these ideas with the logo, the two outer letters (R and N) are strong and sturdy (protection) while the A (action) is more slender and agile in italics. The two circles were added to break up the acronym so it did not read so much as one word, but more like the individual letters (the process for the logo can be seen on page 11).

When the campaign started to be developed, I had a lot of inspired ideas that were not all working together. I knew I wanted the campaign to be different, eye-catching, and a little in-your-face. I had some initial ideas along the lines of cutting paper (as to symbolize that there is literally something missing). Another direction was to have fragmented pieces, almost like a broken mirror with an image inside (symbolizing the broken nature of the issues at hand). These ideas, while intriguing to me, did not develop much further than the sketch phase (seen on page 12). Running into the same issue I had with the logo, I felt that I could not illustrate all of RAN's issues together. Therefore, I decided to do a series of posters, choosing three issues to illustrate—energy, human rights, and de-forestation.

Finally deciding on a direction for the campaign, using patterns to illustrate the causes, I researched many hand-done patterns, which to me, convey a sense of

intimacy on a human level that the computer cannot always capture. I wanted the feeling of the campaign to be somewhat raw, and the hand-done look was most appropriate. Within the exploration of the pattern theme (seen on page 13), I had many variations. I had some with only pattern, some with a negative image in the foreground (such as a tree stump, smoke stacks, and person with bands covering their eyes and mouth). This was not working because not all of the issues were being symbolized on the same level and the human rights symbol had many underlying issues such as, what would the race of the person be? It also looked more like a free speech image, veering away from the broader issue. This is when I decided to use a hand to symbolize human rights instead—a symbol still associated with human rights without singling out one group of people.

After thinking more about what I wanted the pattern to represent, as well as what I wanted the foreground image to signify, it no longer made sense to have the negative connotation of the image in front. It was, after all, the pattern of negatively reoccurring themes that made the most sense, with the positive image breaking that pattern. The tag line of “break it” came to me quickly, and after deliberating whether or not to change it to “break the pattern”, I decided that simply “break it” was more intriguing and left more for the viewer to figure out (variations of posters can be seen on page 14). The decision to have the posters not bleed to the edge of the paper was intentional, for, this would save paper if the posters were mass-produced on a large roll of paper. Also, for the convenience of printing on a standard printer with 11x17

printing capabilities, the posters can simply be printed with no trimming necessary (final posters can be seen on page 15).

When thinking about the brochure and mailer, although they do both bleed, I did want to implement green design in both of these as well. The brochure, a small, economical size, would fit 3-up on an 18” roll of paper. The mailer is really where I saw some potential to create a piece that was innovative in its design. I wanted to have the mailer serve a dual purpose, such as, have it turn into an envelope after its initial usage. After much exploration of concept, it was rejected because when asking for money it has to be as easy as possible for people to mail. Hence, the idea of people needing to fold their own envelopes did not seem like the best idea. I eventually came to construct a mailer that only had one envelope instead of two. Instead of having the mailer come in an envelope, it was bi-folded with an envelope attached by perforation that could be easily ripped off and mailed back with money in it (finals for the brochure and mailer can be seen on page 16).

All components of the project are printed on 100% post-consumer Neenah Environmental paper in Desert Storm and use only black ink. The use of one color for the whole campaign with the combination of the paper used as the background, make the campaign not only green, but also practical. It is not only green by using a minimal amount of ink, but it would also be much more fool-proof when printing due to elimination of other colors that may print differently on different printers.

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Rainforest Action Network



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Rainforest Action Network


**RAINFOREST
ACTION NETWORK**

final logo



R.A.N. RAINFOREST
ACTION
NETWORK

Human Rights
Deforestation
Energy

all some
kind of
symbolism

call to action
Help to fight for human rights
Help to

broken - "break the pattern" - pattern
empty
disappear
space
cut lines or give lines
hope
shock
connect
missing
strong
edgy
raw
void
natural
statement
identity
activism
intimacy
human level

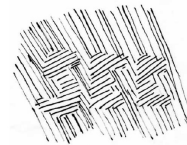
broken
mend
put back together

- Help to fight for human rights
- Help ~~the~~ to support
RAN in the ongoing issue
of human rights
- Help stop the repeat
offenses
- we can stop the
pattern

phrase
that draws you in
smoke stacks - clouds, swirls
trees - roots, or rings (stump), leaves, branches
human rights



← Cut out of paper
we can still fill in the
gaps
space
emptiness



disappear

R.A.N

cut paper

FILL IT IN
MISSING PIECES
FILL THE emptiness
FILL THE SPACE
VOID

cut here
glue here
away here

image in
pieces
BROKEN



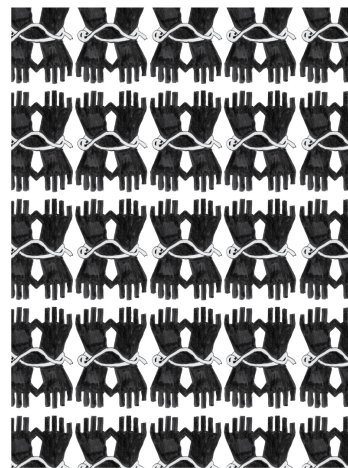
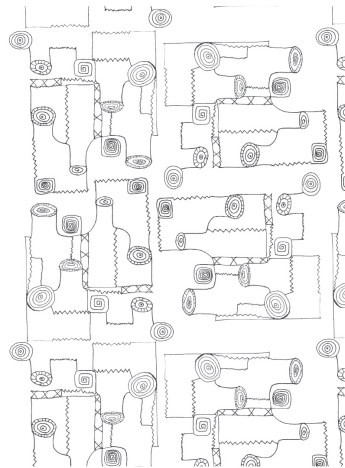
like a white pic - constructivist look

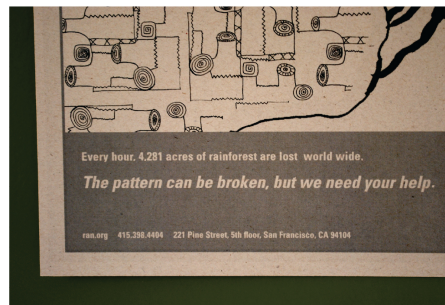
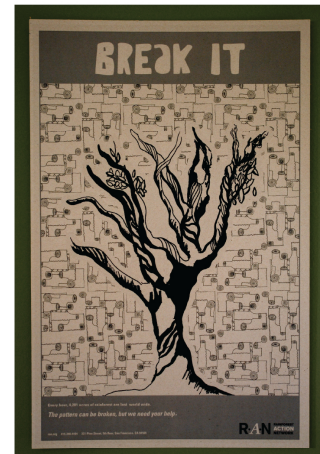


cut tree



smoke
block







Chapter IV – Summary and Recommendations

After completing this project, one which has been exciting to work on during the entire process, I believe it reached the potential I initially envisioned. It was a challenge to not only build a whole campaign, but to also research and implement green design within it. I have learned a lot and struggled a lot along the way. I knew this project had a great potential to be something unlike anything I had ever done before, and I think I reached the goals I set for myself. Using a paper as a background color alone was out of the ordinary, being so into the routine of using white paper for everything. I really stood back and carefully considered all aspects of this project in every step of the way, careful to balance not only my ideas and the visuals, but also to think about how it would be printed, the sizing of each piece, and if I really was pushing the green aspect of the project. That said, I know there is always more to learn and more to be done in terms of being sustainable and green. This was a good starting point for me, and I will continue to implement what I have learned in this project in my future projects.

Along with what I learned about green design through this project, I also took the visuals in a direction I have not explored very much in the past. Although able to draw when I put my mind to it, I have not done a lot of illustration for my graphic work. It was refreshing to go in this direction, for in a way, it is the sort of art I grew up doing, and I think it made the project a lot more personal for me. The project ended up combining my knowledge and skills I have acquired on the computer in the past four years while still bringing in my real passion for fine art I had drifted away

from. In short, this project encompasses my past present and future—my initial fine art skills I used to get into Cal Poly, my technical computer knowledge and type setting, and my curiosity for new explorations in both the patterning and green design. Overall, I think this project challenged me, made me think outside of my box, and accomplished just what I had intended.

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